

**A STUDY ON UPPER EXTREMITY MUSCULOSKELETAL DISCOMFORT
RELATED TO COMPUTER USE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**

By

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ABSTRACT

A limited number of studies have focused on computer-use-related upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort among college students, though risk factors in terms of exposure may be similar to professional workers who use computers. The use of computer has increased among college students, as have musculoskeletal symptoms. There is evidence that these symptoms can be reduced through ergonomics and education approach. From literature reviews, it was found that the following were risks factors related to computer use: body posture, duration of computer use, psychosocial factors, work environment, complaints and history of musculoskeletal problems. In this study, the associations of these independent variables to upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort (dependent variable) among college students were determined. In other words, the purpose of this study was to examine whether the risk factors for upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort among college students would significantly lead to musculoskeletal discomfort especially upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort. A cross-sectional correlation study was carried out to determine the correlation. A total of 132 questionnaires were distributed, only 130 (98.5%) students completed a self-administered questionnaire concerning the risk factors and the upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort specifically associated with computer use. The research hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation Analysis. The results revealed that body posture, psychosocial factors, complaints and history of musculoskeletal pain were significantly correlated to upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort. However, duration of break time and work environment were on the contrary. Multiple Regression results revealed that 35.8% of the variance (R-square) in upper extremity discomfort has been significantly explained by the six independent variables. There were other factors that need to be considered that might contribute to upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort. The findings signal a need for intervention, apart from ergonomics parameters various psychosocial workplace factors need to be considered while designing a preventive intervention program, including training and education on posture, prior to entry into the workforce. Students are future workers therefore it is important to determine whether their increasing exposure to computers, prior to entering the workforce may make them already injured or do not enter their chosen profession due to upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort. The future health of undergraduate students deserves consideration, therefore more research is needed on this matter.

Keyword: computer risk factors; computer user; upper extremity musculoskeletal discomfort

ABSTRAK

Kajian mengenai masalah ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas berkaitan dengan penggunaan komputer dalam kalangan pelajar kolej adalah terhad walaupun risiko pendedahan mungkin sama dengan pekerja profesional. Penggunaan komputer yang meningkat dalam kalangan pelajar kolej menyebabkan peningkatan gejala muskuloskeletal. Bukti menunjukkan bahawa gejala tersebut dapat dikurangkan melalui kaedah ergonomik dan pendidikan. Ulasan dari penyelidikan yang lalu mendapati bahawa faktor risiko yang berkaitan dengan penggunaan komputer adalah seperti postur tubuh, jangka masa penggunaan komputer, faktor psikososial, persekitaran kerja seperti ruang kerja dan keadaan sekeliling serta aduan dan sejarah masalah ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas. Hubungkait di antara faktor risiko tersebut dan masalah ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas ditentukan dalam kajian ini. Dengan kata lain, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat sama ada faktor risiko yang ada di kalangan pelajar kolej boleh menyebabkan masalah ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas. Untuk tujuan ini, kajian keratan rentas korelasi telah dilakukan untuk memastikan hubungkaitnya. Sebanyak 132 soalselidik telah diedarkan kepada para responden dan hanya 130 (98.5%) soalselidik dikembalikan semula. Hipotesis penyelidikan telah diuji menggunakan Analisis Korelasi Pearson. Didapati postur tubuh, faktor psikososial, sejarah gejala ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas mempunyai hubungan yang positif terhadap gejala ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas. Namun demikian, jangka masa rehat dari menggunakan komputer dan persekitaran kerja menunjukkan hubungan yang sebaliknya. Ujian Regresi Berganda menunjukkan 35.8% variasi yang terdapat dalam kajian ini telah berjaya dijelaskan oleh enam faktor risiko yang terlibat di dalam kajian ini. Keputusan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa perlunya ada intervensi selain dari ergonomik, pelbagai faktor psikososial di tempat kerja yang harus dipertimbangkan semasa merangka program intervensi pencegahan. Ini termasuklah latihan dan pendidikan yang seharusnya diberikan sebelum melibatkan diri dalam dunia pekerjaan. Pelajar adalah pekerja kita di masa hadapan, oleh itu penting bagi kita menentukan sama ada peningkatan pendedahan terhadap komputer di kolej atau universiti akan menyebabkan mereka mengalami gejala ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas sebelum menyertai dunia pekerjaan. Akibat dari gejala yang dialami, mereka mungkin tidak dapat memilih kerjaya mereka lantaran dari masalah gejala ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas. Masa hadapan kesihatan pelajar memerlukan perhatian sewajarnya. Maka diharapkan lebih banyak pihak membuat penyelidikan berhubung dengan isu ini di masa hadapan.

Kata kunci: faktor risiko komputer; pengguna komputer; gejala ketidakselesaan pada anggota atas

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Title page	i
Certification of project paper work	ii
Permission to use	iii
Abstract	iv
Abstrak	v
Acknowledgement	vi
Table of contents	vii
List of tables	xi
List of figures	xii
List of abbreviation	xiii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Computer issues	1
1.2	Information about Institute Megatech	4
1.3	Background of the study	6
1.4	Problem statement	9
1.5	Research question	11
1.6	Research objectives	12
1.7	The scope of the study	14
1.8	Significance of the study	14
1.9	Summary and the organization of the thesis	14

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	16
2.2	Health and Safety Legislation	16
2.3	Theory of musculoskeletal disorders	18
2.4	Review of Previous Research Studies	
2.4.1	Musculoskeletal disorders	19
2.4.2	Risk factors for MSDs related to computer work	
2.4.2.1	Work environment	23
2.4.2.2	Body Posture	24
2.4.2.3	Break time of computer use	26
2.4.2.4	Psychosocial factors	27
2.4.2.5	Gender	28
2.4.2.6	Age	29
2.4.2.7	History of musculoskeletal symptoms	29
2.4.2.8	Body region complaints	29
2.5	Summary	30

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	The research framework and the hypotheses of the study	31
3.3	Research design	34
3.4	Definitions of Key Terms	34
3.5	The Sampling Procedure	
3.5.1	Population of the study	36
3.5.2	Sample of the study	36
3.6	The Survey Instruments	36

3.7	Reverse Score Items and Back Translation	37
3.8	The pilot study	40
3.9	Data Collection Procedure	40
3.10	Analysis of the Data	
3.10.1	Data Screening and Normality Distribution	41
3.10.2	Reliability of Instrument	43
3.10.3	Descriptive Statistic	43
3.10.4	Hypotheses Testing	43
3.11	Approval from Institute Megatech	44
3.12	Summary	44

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1	Introduction	45
4.2	Distribution of questionnaire	45
4.3	Reliability analysis	45
4.4	Demographic analysis	
4.4.1	Analysis based on gender	47
4.4.2	Analysis based on age	48
4.4.3	Analysis based on race	48
4.4.4	Analysis based on duration of computer use	49
4.4.5	Analysis based on computer ownership	49
4.4.6	Analysis based on type of computer	50
4.4.7	Analysis based on course taken	50
4.5	Descriptive statistic	
4.5.1	Analysis of gender and break time	51
4.5.2	Analysis of gender and complaints	51
4.5.3	Analysis of gender and history of discomfort	52
4.5.4	Analysis of gender and posture	52
4.5.5	Analysis of gender and psycho social	53
4.5.6	Analysis part of upper extremity discomfort	53
4.5.7	Analysis of upper extremity symptoms	53
4.5.8	Priority of variables	54
4.6	Hypotheses analysis	
4.6.1	Correlation	54
4.6.2	Multiple Regression	59
4.7	Discussion	62

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Summary	71

5.3	Limitations	73
5.4	Recommendation	75
REFERENCES		78
APPENDICES		
APPENDIX 1	Letter to Megatech Institute	86
APPENDIX 2	Approval from Megatech	87
APPENDIX 3	Questionnaire (English Version)	88
APPENDIX 4	Questionnaire (Malay Version)	95
APPENDIX 5	Reliability test for variables	102
APPENDIX 6	Analysis of complaints and history	111

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1	Ergonomics mention in Act and Regulation 17
Table 4.1	Number of questionnaire 45
Table 4.2	Cronbach's Alpha for pilot study 46
Table 4.3	Cronbach's Alpha for final questionnaire 47
Table 4.4	Analysis based on gender 47
Table 4.5	Analysis based on age 48
Table 4.6	Analysis based on race 48
Table 4.7	Analysis based on race specify 48
Table 4.8	Analysis of respondents based on duration of computer use 49
Table 4.9	Analysis of respondents based on computer ownership 50
Table 4.10	Analysis of respondents based on type of computer 50
Table 4.11	Analysis of respondents based in course taken 51
Table 4.12	Gender and break time 51
Table 4.13	Gender and complaint 51
Table 4.14	Gender and history of musculoskeletal symptoms 52
Table 4.15	Gender and posture 52
Table 4.16	Gender and psychosocial factors 53
Table 4.17	Descriptive Statistic Priority of variables 54
Table 4.18	Correlations body posture and UED 55
Table 4.19	Correlations break time and UED 56
Table 4.22	Correlations psychosocial and UED 56
Table 4.21	Correlations work environment and UED 57
Table 4.22	Correlations history and UED 58
Table 4.23	Correlations complaints and UED 59
Table 4.24	Multiple Regression 60
Table 4.25	Summary of findings 61

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 2-1	Carpal Tunnel Syndrome	22
Figure 2-2	Thoracic Outlet Syndrome	22
Figure 2-3	De Quervain's Tenosynovitis	23
Figure 2-4	Common causes of Musculoskeletal Disorders	25
Figure 3-1	Research Framework	31
Figure 5-1	Tips for Office Ergonomics	77

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NIOSH	National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
MSDs	Musculoskeletal Disorders
MSK	Musculoskeletal
NADOPOD	Notification of Accident, Dangerous Occurrence, Poisoning and Occupational Disease
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Act
SHC	Safety and Health Committee
SHO	Safety and Health Officer
SOCISO	Social Security Organization
UED	Upper Extremity Disorders
U.S	United States
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Computer issues

Computers have become ubiquitous in every home and workplace in today's world. According to U.S Census Bureau (2005), in 2003 itself there were 70 million American households which had more than one computer. This number is an increase from 56% in 2001 to 62% in 2003. Over the years, computer based technology has caused work intensity to increase and created a stressful and unhealthy working condition, inadvertently contributing to an increase in work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs). Interestingly, computer-related musculoskeletal disorders contribute to a significant public health burden and accounted for one-third of lost work days in 2006 (Bureau of Labor Statistic, 2008).

Generally, it is undeniable that computers help to improve and increase productivity, however, there are many significant adverse effects on musculoskeletal system due to extensive computer use as reported by Wilkens (2003). Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) encompass a spectrum of musculoskeletal injuries that are related to work (Green, 2008). WMSDs are a group of painful disorders of muscles, tendons, and nerves. Carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, thoracic outlet syndrome, and tension neck syndrome are examples. Work activities which are frequent and repetitive, or activities with awkward postures cause these disorders which may be painful during work or at rest.

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